

The undeniable Proof of Christ's Death

Exploring John 19:34 and the Spear Thrust

Good evening everyone, welcome to the auditorium at Calvary Road Baptist Church in Monrovia, California. It's a warm day today, but thank goodness we have fans, amen. I have an air conditioner, but I hate running it. I like fans better than I like AC. Don't get me wrong, I appreciate Mr. Carrier very much. I thank God for him a lot, but I don't need his services at this time. Invite you to go to the Lord in prayer with me.

Father, we thank you for your goodness, appreciate the opportunity to gather for a midweek study of the Bible and a season of prayer, and we pray that you might help us to acknowledge our complete and utter dependence upon you for wisdom and for will. There are some people that don't do right because they don't want to do right, and then there's others of us want to do right, but the ingrained habits of a lifetime and the weakness that we have in our natures makes it very challenging, and we need grace from on high, not only what to do, but how to go about doing it. We know that the natural man receives not the things of the spirit, but also, even for believers, there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death, and so we recognize we need to depend upon your wisdom, we need to depend upon your word, and we ask that you might provide that in abundant supply as we study your Bible this evening. We pray also for Ruby Slooick's family, the memorial service next week. We pray for Tim. We pray for Fine as he recovers from that very, very bad motorcycle accident. We pray for Joe as he recovers and deals with his Camp Lejeune marine issues. We pray for Jackie, that she and Sakura would recover well. For Nazarin, that she is able to find an organ donor. We appreciate the opportunity to lift her up in prayer. We pray for Brian. I'm so thankful for his upturn in his kidney function and how well he's doing. We pray for the challenging issues that are being faced by Jim at this time with, when you've got two different HMOs, each of them arguing on what's best for you, and he's caught in the middle. We pray for my friend Dan, and for Erica and Sarah's pregnancies. We pray for Greg's recovery from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. We pray for our sick loved ones. We pray for our through-the-Bible reading program. Help us to read the Bible, to plow through it from beginning to end, despite how challenging and how much understanding we have. Help us to get through, and then to begin next year and do it again, and then next year to do it again, and so the Bible becomes comprehensible to us as we become more and more familiar with its uneven terrain. Help us to be disciplined in that regard, and someday, people who have been believers for as long as I have will have read the Bible through as many times as I have, and they will, they will not ever regret reading the infallible word of God. Please, as we commit ourselves this

evening to opening up our hearts and minds to receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save our souls, that you might bless us with divine truth, and we will for that thank you and praise you in Jesus' name, amen.

I want to invite you to turn in your Bible, please, to John chapter 19. John chapter 19. We are dealing with the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know there was, for years, there were unbelievers who questioned and challenged whether there was a Jesus of Nazareth. That has been absolutely debunked by archaeology. Then there were those that wondered whether or not he was crucified. That is an absolutely irrefutable historical reality, and we are looking at what happened when he was crucified, shortly after he gave up the ghost there on Golgotha's brow between two thieves. We looked at John 19:33 last time, and we're looking verse by verse at the events that followed his death on the cross, not that anyone took his life from him, but he gave up the ghost. He surrendered his life in atonement for my sins. Now we're looking at John 19:34 that reads, "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water."

There's two groups of soldiers on the hill. The first group of soldiers, this Roman execution squad, probably numbered four or five guys, maybe six, and they had the grisly task of getting these three guys to the place of crucifixion just outside the Damascus gate, so that everybody coming in and going out and coming in and going out during the course of the day would see these three guys hanging on crosses. That was the Roman reminder of who's in charge, who you better listen to, or else, and typically, it would take guys days on the cross to die. There have been some instances of some guys lasting as long as 10 days before they finally expired, and typically what happens is their muscles lose strength, and they slip, they slump down and lurch forward, and they are asphyxiated, so they die from lack of oxygen. But of course, because the next day was the Sabbath day, these religious Jews who had no problem with lying about him, they had no problem seeing him found guilty of crimes he did not commit, they had no problem arranging for his death, oh, but we mustn't leave people hanging on the cross once the sun goes down. That would break the law. Well, everything they had done for the last 24 hours broke the law, but this is the way legalists are. They pick and choose what things they will do, what things they're going to let slide, and they went back to Pontius Pilate and begged Pilate to implement the strategy of expediting the death process, the dying process, because the Romans also had a big, probably about a 10-pound iron mallet. Some of you have swung a five-pound hammer. This is roughly a 10-pound hammer, and Pilate acceded to their wishes and sent out a second team, a second execution squad, and they got out there with orders to hasten the death of the three guys hanging on the cross. And if you recall, they went to first one thief, and the guy swinging the mallet would smash his legs, so that he couldn't support himself. He would slump down and almost immediately die. They skipped from one guy, one thief on the cross, they skipped over the Lord Jesus Christ and went to the other thief on the cross, and I discussed with you at the time, the way people normally do it, especially if it's a routine task that you've done hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of times, guys have a tendency to want to slip into a pattern, okay, so that they do one, two, three, almost never will they do one, three, two, so that's unusual. But

the guy came up, and he swung and hit the legs of one thief and smashed them, hit the legs of the other thief and smashed them, and if verse 33 was the first witness to the Lord Jesus Christ's death, it reads they came to Jesus and saw that he was dead already. This is corroboration of that testimony, so there's no doubt that he's dead. Who would know that somebody was dead more than Roman soldiers whose job it was to crucify guys, okay? They had caused the death of more people than you and I can imagine over the course of their careers, and notice the final phrase of John chapter 19:33, they brake not his legs, referring to the Lord's legs.

Now, I want you to take note of the opening words of verse 34. Verse 34 says, "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side." One of the soldiers. The execution squads numbered four, five, six guys, but only one of them apparently had a spear and used it, but I want you to notice, before we move on, just a little bit of point. We have some contrasting actions, what the Roman soldiers, plural, what the squad of men did, actually what they did not do, okay? See, what do you mean, what did they not do? Well, they broke the legs of the first thief, and they broke the legs of the second thief. Remember, one Roman soldier grabbing one leg, another Roman soldier grabbing another leg, so these guys can't squirm, and the guy with the mallet is whacking him as they're holding him still, and then they went over to the other thief and did the same thing. But about the Lord, it says they brake not his legs. Verse 34 reads, "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side." What they did not, what they did not do, but what he did do. Those kind of contrasts and wordplay are kind of interesting, so we see their contrasting actions, what the Roman soldiers, plural, did not do, as opposed to what one Roman soldier did do.

Now, it would be very unlikely if both phrases did not refer to members of the second of the Roman execution squads. The first Roman execution squad, these are the guys that got them nailed to the cross and got the crosses upright, and basically, their job is done. They've got their assignment, and they've got nothing else to do but gamble for clothes and taunt and torment, but no more hard work. And so, if somebody came along and says, "Well, we need to break their legs so these guys die," excuse me, it was the first-century version of not my job, not my job, not my job, that's not what I was told to do. Well, Pilate said, "Do that." Oh, he didn't tell me to do that. Maybe he told you to do that. He didn't tell us to do that. And so, it would have been the second squad of men dispatched by Pilate later who had, from his own mouth, orders to dispatch the three that were hanging from the cross more quickly, so that they could get their bodies down before the sun went down and the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath.

What motivation the one soldier had for thrusting his spear into the Lord's side, we don't pretend to know. You got to know something about Roman spears. Roman spears were very high-tech. They were specifically designed with the spear point was made out of a metal that was designed to bend, but not to be too soft. The Romans designed their spears so that when they threw the spear, it could not be picked up and thrown back at them. So, when they launched the spear, they wanted it to hit the target, to penetrate, and then to bend, okay? That means a Roman soldier carrying a spear, if he wants to put that into someone's side, he's got to be particular about how and where he does

that, because he doesn't want to make, he doesn't want the spear to become useless to his future use, because he hasn't really used it for its intended purposes. So, most people don't realize that about those. The Romans were very high-tech. You know, they had that short fighting sword, and it was very common for new recruits into the Roman army to gripe about how short the sword was, and when they complain to the centurion, he says, "Well, I've got a solution for your problem." And they, "Yeah, what is it?" He said, "Take a step closer." Seriously, but they were not soldiers trained to engage in one-on-one combat. There was always squad effort, okay? And that sword that they had was a thrusting-only sword. It wasn't for sword fighting. The spear was for throwing. They carried it, but it was primarily for throwing it. And so, what can be said about his use of the spear? We don't know exactly why he did that. They already knew he was dead. They had already arrived at the conclusion. Did he want to inflict one last vengeful blow to the body of this guy that he was opposed to and was cruel toward? We don't know whether it was sinful animosity toward the Holy One of Israel or not, but maybe it was. Whatever, whatever the motive was, when he thrust the spear up into the Savior's side, what resulted from that was absolutely undeniable proof that that spear point had been thrust into a corpse. It was not thrust into the body of someone who was alive.

So, what can be said about the blood and water that flowed from the wound that was caused by the spear? First, it cannot be said that the spear thrust killed him. The spear thrust did not kill him, since the separation of blood from clear plasma would not have resulted immediately upon death. Your red corpuscles, your red blood cells, do not separate from the blood plasma immediately when you die. It takes the passage of a little bit of time for that to happen. So, for that to come out of the wound means that he was already dead. That spear thrust did not take his life, and he had been dead for some time. Secondly, it is wrongly speculated by some that this is evidence of the Lord Jesus Christ dying of a broken heart. What's wrong with that? Well, he died of a broken heart. No, no, no, no, he didn't die of a broken heart. This is wrong because a broken heart speaks of discouragement, a broken heart speaks of failure, and a broken heart speaks of defeat, while the Lord Jesus Christ's death was, in fact, an astounding victory. It was not a defeat. He cried out before he gave up the ghost, "It is finished," and then he gave up the ghost. Third, if the Lord Jesus Christ died of a broken heart, then he did not lay down his life. His death was not the result of a voluntary sacrifice, but he did lay down his life. His death was a voluntary sacrifice. He gave up the ghost. Ergo, he did not die of a broken heart, and no matter how sentimentally nice it may sound to some people that say, "Oh, the Lord died of a broken heart." And they, "Oh, that sounds that." No, don't let that, don't let that pass by. Stop that in its tracks, because that's not a proper conclusion to draw from how the Lord Jesus Christ's death came about.

Observation of what is described in non-technical language as blood and water. It wasn't water, it was plasma. We know that, but the Bible is not a technical book. It is visually accurate, but it is not a technical book. It's not a science textbook, and there are two certainties from this observation that what came out of the wound was blood and water. First, that our Lord was dead, and he was not in a swoon. I don't know if you've ever read anything by unbelievers, but the unbelievers, the ones that deny the resurrection, they claim, well, you know, the Lord Jesus Christ didn't really die. He just

fainted from dehydration and from the terrible beating he got. He swooned, and they took his body down off the cross, and they put it in a rich man's tomb, and there, in the cool of the evening, in that cool air, he revived, and he got out somehow. Well, the spear point in his side and the blood and water coming out shows that no, there's no room for any swoon theory in your thinking, as well, that our Lord had been dead for some few minutes, long enough for this mixture that comprises circulating blood in a live human being has stopped and has begun to separate, okay?

Now, I want you to notice how this fulfills a prediction from Zechariah 12 and verse 10. You don't need to turn there. Let me read it to you. Zechariah 12 and verse 10 reads, and this was, this was predicted centuries before the crucifixion, centuries before his birth, but it reads, "And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications." And if you look at the context back at the beginning of the chapter, the "I" who was speaking is Jehovah, the God of Israel, "and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." Now, notice several important details in connection with the verse. You can go back and check it if you want to. First, take note of who is speaking in the narrative from verses 4, 6, 9, and here in verse 10. Verse four, "In that day, I will, I will." That's the God of Israel speaking. Verse six, "In that day, I will make." That's the God of Israel speaking. Verse nine, "And it shall come to pass in that day that I will." That's the God of Israel speaking. And then in verse 10, "And I will." That's the God of Israel speaking. That's my assertion. It's up to you to go back and verify that what I'm saying is true, amen. So, clearly, these are words spoken by the Lord in this Old Testament prophecy, but next, notice the change of person in verse 10. "And I will pour, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." I, me, him, I, me, him, I, me, him. If it is the Lord who is speaking here, Jehovah, and it is, then this utterance was spoken by different persons bearing that name, different persons bearing that name. One person will pour out on the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications. That's what one of these persons named Jehovah is going to do. Another person named Jehovah declares that he will be looked upon, who has been pierced, and back to the first person, reference is made to bitterness for the firstborn. So, we've got the first person speaking, and then a second person of the same name speaking, and then back to the first person of the same name. These two verses, taken together, shout the Trinity, with one person of the triune Godhead pouring out the spirit of grace and supplications, and what's the spirit of grace and supplications? That's an allusion to the Holy Spirit, right? That would be a third person, and the other being crucified, pierced, and being the firstborn. Well, that's a description of the Lord Jesus Christ, and this prediction came centuries ago, before any Jew had ever been crucified by anyone. What a coincidence, huh? Or predictive prophecy.

So, let me conclude with a discussion about the amount of blood that came from the spear wound inflicted on the Savior's lifeless body. I got a bunch of commentaries in all of these passages. They talk about certain aspects of this, but there's other aspects of

this that they pay no attention to at all. Causes me to wonder whether these guys that write these books has ever done a day of labor in his life. Some skeptics observe that when a spear is thrust into the cavity of a corpse, the amount of blood that typically exits the wound is a very, very small amount, just a teaspoon or two. When you thrust a blade up into somebody's chest after the person is dead, up into the corpse, almost no blood comes out. So, how did it come to be that so much blood exited the wound made by the spear thrust into the Lord's body? Well, here's a paragraph written by a guy who discusses this matter, and he writes, sharp guy, he writes, "Medical experts disagree on what was pierced: small intestines, stomach, liver, lungs, heart. Doesn't say. The two most common theories are these: a) the spear pierced his heart, and the blood from the heart mingled with the fluid from the pericardial sac to produce the flow of blood and water. Possible, but the heart is a little bit over on this side, okay? By contrast, it has been argued that fluid from the pericardial sac could not so easily escape from the body by such a wound. It would fill up the chest cavity. In other words, the blood would fill the lungs, filling the space around the lung, and then oozing into the lung itself through the wound the spear made. In tests performed on cadavers, it has been shown that where a chest has been severely injured, but without penetration, hemorrhagic fluid, up to two liters of it, gathers between the pleural lining the rib cage and the lining of the lung. That's the space between, inside the ribs and the lungs. This separates the clearer serum at the top, the deep red layer at the bottom. If the chest cavity were then pierced at the bottom, both layers would flow out." What he's saying is the thrust had to come from the bottom up, so it would go through the thicker, heavier red that had separated from the clear plasma, and you go up through that, and then both would come out.

Now, it doesn't surprise me that commentators who write about the spear thrust into the Lord's dead body have almost nothing to say about the actual deed. Have you ever noticed that in almost every picture or drawing or portrait of the crucifixion, they always have it so that the cross is so high up that the Lord's feet are about this high? No, no. How high off the ground does the cross need to have the crucified person for it to have its proper effect and to make it as easy as possible for the lazy Roman soldiers to hoist it up and drop it in the hole? His feet only have to be about that far off the ground. So, if the Lord Jesus Christ was 5'6", 5'7", I could walk up to where he was crucified, and we would be eye to eye, because I'm six feet tall. His feet only needed to be off the ground about that far. I mean, let's say a person is going to hang by the neck until dead. How far off the ground does his feet have to be? About that far, just enough. And I'm of the opinion that guys that do a lot of heavy lifting and stuff have a minimalist approach. They want to get it done for the least amount of effort possible, especially if it's what you do for a living, and you do the same thing over and over and over and over and over and over and over again. Are you going to want to make it so that you got to tilt this thing way up in the air and have it drop down, and then you got to reach way up there to where the guy to get him down? No, no. Where his arms are, maybe up to here, so that they could very easily reach up there and cut loose the bindings and pull through where the nail had gone through between, is it the radius and the ulna, okay? So, the artists are wrong. He wasn't way up in the air. His feet were probably about this far off the ground, okay?

Now, what about the actual deed? Would you say that most Roman soldiers were right-handed or left-handed? The Latin word for left is sinister. They thought left was evil. When my grandfather was in school, although he was left-handed, they made him learn how to write with his right hand, and he signed his name with his right hand. He didn't do anything else with his right hand, and he didn't play baseball, so. But the vast majority of Roman soldiers were right-handed. So, if you walk up to somebody who's hanging from a cross, and your goal is to prove that this is a cadaver, this is a dead body, this person has already died, and you're going to take this spear point, which is intentionally not made of the toughest metal you have, okay? It's not made out of the same kind of iron that your sword is made out of, okay? And you're going to thrust it into the guy. Are you going to try to drive it through his rib cage? Is it likely that you're going to try to get it through his rib cage? You might, you might, but wouldn't it be easier to get underneath the ribs? And so, you get it into place, you put that point, and you, like that. I can see you've never stabbed anybody or worked in a slaughterhouse, okay? There's certain things you learn as a teenager working in a slaughterhouse. But that's what happened, and because he's a right-handed soldier, it's almost certain that the wound was inflicted on the left side of the Savior's body, and if it was inflicted on the left side, coming up through the diaphragm, it would go through lungs and heart, and that's how you got all of that blood back out.

So, why did the guy do it? I don't know. The fact is, it doesn't matter why. When my daughter was growing up, I almost never asked her why she did what she did. If a child is doing something wrong, it's almost irrelevant why they do it. What's relevant is that they do it, okay? This guy did that. I'm, I don't really care what his motives are. What I care about was that the Lord Jesus Christ's body was not broken, in fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy, because his body was already dead, and to absolutely verify, beyond any shadow of doubt, so that nobody could come along later, except through profound ignorance, and try to assume that he wasn't really dead, this Roman soldier lifted a spear, probably underneath a rib cage, up into his heart sac, and there, that blood and water came out, proving beyond any shadow of doubt that not only was he dead, but that he had been dead for several minutes, enough for the blood to begin separating, the heavier from the lighter plasma.

So, you say, "Well, what's the big deal here?" Well, the big deal is, we can prove beyond any shadow of doubt that the Lord Jesus Christ actually existed. There's no doubt about it, because you don't even have to open your Bible to prove that. All over, all over the world, in the Roman world and among the Jews, there were writings establishing that Jesus of Nazareth was a real human being. There is absolutely no doubt that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified. A very famous Jewish general who fought against the Romans wrote a book titled *Antiquities*, and in that, he pointed out that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified, okay? And he was no Christian, right? And then, he was buried. Well, why would they bury him? Well, because he was dead. It can be proven beyond any shadow of doubt that he was dead, and it can also be proven beyond any shadow of doubt that he rose from the dead. How do I know he rose from the dead? Five historical realities. There was someone named Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, okay? And he was buried, okay? The fact that so many thousands of Christians were willing to die, and the

reason they were willing to die is because of their stated claim that they had seen him after he rose from the dead, and nobody dies for what they know is a lie. Fourth, the greatest enemy of Christianity who ever lived was the Apostle Paul, and the greatest enemy of Christianity who ever lived became the greatest Christian who ever lived, and he said it was because he had seen the Lord Jesus Christ raised from the dead. And then, the greatest skeptic who ever lived was the half-brother of the Lord Jesus Christ, named James, who actually saw his brother crucified, and then saw his brother raised from the dead, and he became the pastor of the church at Jerusalem. He became the most prominent pastor of the first century, and his claim was that he had seen his brother risen from the dead. So, I can prove that he existed, that he was crucified, that he died, that he was buried, and that he rose again. That is historical proof without ever cracking open a Bible.

Next week, Lord willing, we look at John chapter 19 and verse 35. Let's pray. Father, thank you for your goodness, for the opportunity to study the infallible word of God, the bedrock of our belief. Please now bless it to our bodies. Help us to remember these things, increase our confidence in what we hold to be true, and we will thank you, in Jesus' name, amen. I'm wondering, does anyone have a question related to John chapter 19 and verse 34? Yes, sir, speaking. If you said that, like, would they have to be on, probably, or bent over? Yeah, but the guy with the hammer, he's just going for, like a nine iron, and whack him on the shins, break the legs. Can you imagine if they had, if the artists' conceptions are true, then his feet are up this high. That means the guy's got to take the 10-pounder and swing it up here. No, no, that's just, that's not the way they did it. That's not the way they did it. So, you don't get your, you don't get your theology of the Old Testament from *The Ten Commandments*. You don't get your understanding of crucifixion from *Spartacus*. So, I, you know, even if you like, what's his name, who played Spartacus, Kirk, even if you like Kirk Douglas, you don't get your understanding of crucifixions from *Spartacus*, okay? Good question, though. Yes, anybody else have a question? Yes, sir. Well, because it, because it's a piercing weapon, so, if it's six feet tall, I mean, it's at an angle, and he's doing this. Well, it's an easier weapon to handle if you want to penetrate through a dead body than a sword. A sword, the Roman swords were one-handed. They weren't double-handed, okay? They weren't broadswords. They were basically swinging like this and thrusting, primarily with a shield in this hand. So, that would be considerably more difficult to get into a guy, simply because it's a bigger blade than a spear. I'll be glad to show you my book on the Imperial Roman army if you'd like. But good, good question. Anybody else have a question? Go ahead, go ahead. All right, let me share some announcements before we take up our Wednesday night offering.